



A Survey of Tourists Emotional Satisfaction in Mvog-Betsi Zoo, Yaounde, Centre Region, Cameroon

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Abstract

Zoos and wildlife tourism activities attract visitors with the expectation that visitors will see animals. Though, zoos typically cite animal conservation and education as their main goals, visitors typically cite entertainment reasons for visiting zoos. Hence, the main objective of this study was to determine the management of Mvog-Betsi Zoo through tourists' satisfaction. The method used for data collection was the administration of questionnaire to tourist and also the workers of the zoo. However, the study revealed a significance between educational level of tourists and hygiene rating of the zoo-animal enclosures, $X^2 = 4.667$ $df=6$, $P<0.05$. Results recorded on hygiene rating of the zoo were 50%, 40%, and 10% on 'poor', 'fair', and 'good' respectively. Additionally, 70% and 30% rating was recorded on 'no' and 'yes' respectively on tourists satisfaction. Though the study recorded 70% and 30% rating on 'fair' and 'poor' management of the zoo respectively, there was lack of satisfaction on its services as acknowledged by the tourists. Professionally, 62% of the zoo workers have had educational training in the management of forest and wildlife resources as the study has shown but not on zoo-tourism management. A 63% respondent revealed the problem of zoo logistics as the key challenge faced by the management. Furthermore, a respondent revelation of 37% from the zoo-workers on the need of more wildlife is an additional confirmation of poor zoo management knowledge. Rather, a zoo that is legitimately facing logistical challenges would reject the idea of more wildlife intake into its management. Mvog-Betsi Zoo is a transit point for wildlife seized from hunters around the country, though wildlife tourism component is added to its management objectives in order to raise income that could help in managing the center sustainably, the inclusion of trained tourism scientists would facelift and guarantee positive achievement.

Keywords: Zoos; Wildlife tourism; Entertainment; Tourists satisfaction; Zoo logistics

Introduction

Travel and Tourism have emerged as a backbone of the service industry and are putting impacts on individuals' lives, society and economy in significant ways. With the passage of time, the growing number of tourists is evidence of such importance, as international tourist arrivals reached up to 1.4 million and international tourism receipts hit the recorded level of US\$ 1451 billion in the year 2018 [1]. Tourism also accelerates economic growth and provides an avenue

for unique opportunities in less developed countries [2]. From the previous three decades, the sustainability and competitiveness of the tourism industry are much debated issue. However, according to Eraqi [3] the mere focus on prices and promotion for competitiveness is not enough, therefore, a novel approach with quality-oriented policies should be adopted. In this vein, the needs of the tourists should be catered and satisfaction should be enhanced due to their primary role in the tourism sector, and many researchers have raised this issue and bracketed enhanced tourist satisfaction with the success of tourism industry [4-6].

Visitors also report appreciation of the aesthetic and rear qualities of plants, admiration of gardens' scenery and surroundings, as well as pleasure of being outdoors as one of the key aspects of their enjoyment during zoo visitation [7]. Spending time surrounded by nature provides peaceful and tranquil environment for leisure consumption. Research has shown that visiting zoos and parks gives an opportunity to escape everyday life, with benefits for emotional, psychological, and even spiritual values, enabling recreation in quiet and enjoyable surroundings [8]. Several researchers have investigated the physical design of exhibits [9,10] and available services [11]. For example, Jensen [12] stressed the importance of the "hygiene" factors, such as eating, parking and toilet facilities, because they can have a negative effect on visitors' overall perception and therefore satisfaction.

Foster [6] described that tourist satisfaction is the conformity between tourists' expectations and destinations' characteristics. According to this point of view, tourist satisfaction can be figured out by subjective factors (emotions and needs of tourists) and objective factors (features of the product and service). Literature indicates that there is no consensus and homogeneity regarding the concept of tourist satisfaction [13]. In light of this, the higher level of tourist satisfaction plays its role in the successfulness of a tourist destination and the same has been argued repeatedly that the satisfaction of tourists leads the tourists to revisit and make recommendations to friends and family [14,15]. The revisit and making of recommendations to others refer to the tourist loyalty and this loyalty according to Yuksel et al., [16] can be effective, cognitive or conative in nature.

In this study, tourist satisfaction denotes the positive emotions, feelings, and expectations expressed by tourists with respect to tourist visitation [17,18]. Furthermore, the emotional enjoyment, the perception and image of destination as well as quality of provided services also contributes to tourist satisfaction [14,19]. Consequently, it can be regarded that tourist satisfaction is the combination of the features of a tourist destination and the perceptions of tourists [20]. Despite the extensive literature on tourism and tourist satisfaction, the consensus about the antecedents of tourist satisfaction and the resulting consequences is lacking.

The few studies that have focused on satisfaction with zoo experiences focus on service aspects such as maps of the zoo and restroom facilities. One study found that the most important factors to visitors were clean restrooms, appropriately sized exhibits with enrichment social activities for the group of visitors, and good views of the animals [21]. Thus, the animals were only mentioned in two out of the four top important factors to zoo visitors in this study. Another survey found that visitors, who were surveyed before entering the zoo,

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had highest expectations for the animals, information on the animals, cleanliness, and general information [22]. Again, animals appeared in half of the items on the importance list. While services consistently rank high in importance, a correlation of 0.64 between visitor satisfaction and services provided. Tomas et al., [23] showed that there are many independent factors that influence visitors satisfaction [24,25]. However, behavioral intentions were also correlated with satisfaction and services provided [23] and the quality of these services and satisfaction [24].

Visitors, when asked to explain their experiences with animals in captivity, noted positive zoo experiences consisting of interacting with animals, learning, seeing a variety of animals, good conditions and services, and memorable emotional experience [26]. While these studies contribute to our knowledge of zoo visitors, overall satisfaction with zoo experiences remains an area full of opportunities for future research. There are very few reports on how to increase visitor satisfaction with zoo experiences. Researchers have found that increased interactions, such as keeper talks and public animal feedings, may increase visitor satisfaction [27].

Materials and Methods

Description of the study area

Mvog-Betsi Zoo- Botanical Garden is both a zoological and botanical garden, located in Yaounde VI District, has an area of 4.70 hectares, and it's situated between latitude 3°7' and 3°9' N and longitude 11°4' and 11°6' E. The zoo has a boundary with Nkolbisson, Melen, Mini-Ferme, and Etoug-Ebe neighborhoods in the north, south, east, and west respectively [28]. This zoo was created in 1951 by a German called Pfeiffer and later handed over to Cameroon government. Presently, the zoo is managed by Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, and it homes 29 species of wildlife and 36 species of flora. Mvog-Betsi Zoo-Botanical Gardens brings together dozens of Cameroon's 280 languages with dozens of species of its wildlife, serving as the touristic face of the country [28].

Data collection

The study data collection method was the administration of questionnaire to both zoo workers and the tourists. All the tourists who visited the zoo during the study period were administered questionnaires. The administration of questionnaires to zoo-workers was done in their offices, though some workers responded timidly in welcoming the study with fear that it might expose their weaknesses, others were enthusiastic about the research program. However, all the questionnaires given to all the respondents were answered. The tourists were attended to at the entrance into the zoo, but the questionnaires were handed back to the researcher only when they were about to leave the zoo premises. In this type of non-random sampling method, the respondents' acceptance to fully participate in the study is important. This method was suitable and convenient for the research due to accessibility, willingness to participate, proximity, participants' accessibility to the researcher, and cost-effectiveness [29].

Data Analysis

The research data of this study was analyzed inferentially and exploratory by using SPSS version 20. Chi-square was the key statistical model used to determine the relation between some variables, such as educational level of tourists and hygiene rating of the wildlife enclosures of the zoo environment. Most of the variables

were described by using simple exploratory models and results were displayed in figures.

Results

The study has revealed a significance between education and hygiene rating of the zoo-animal enclosures, $X^2 = 4.667$ $df=6$, $P<0.05$ (Figure 1). Most zoos around the world visited by tourists provide quality services to the visitors in order to attract more tourism population. Unfortunately, not all the zoo-management authorities are aware of this management approach that could easily stimulate income generation. Quality service provision by zoo workers, firstly might depend on good salaries and secondly the professional training of the workers. Cameroon government has not advanced the professional tourism studies in its university institutions, though many professional academic programs are created in recent years, logistically they are weak as compared to other nations. Additionally, the local academic institutions created to run some of these professional programs are very weak in man-power and continue to graduate individuals with low knowledge on the tourism industry management. Most people working in zoos in Cameroon are facing professional tourism training background challenges, the consequence of poor services at the zoos. Hygiene is a key component in zoo management since the animals could transmit zoonotic infections when not properly handled and quarantined. Neglecting hygiene in the management of zoos raises many questions on the objectives of these facilities; however, hygiene still remains very important. The results recorded on hygiene rating of Mvog-Betsi Zoo was 50%, 40%, and 10% on 'poor', 'fair', and 'good' respectively (Figure 2), reflecting a poor management scheme.

Additionally, the survey recorded 70% and 30% on 'no' and 'yes' respectively (Figure 3) on Mvog-Betsi Zoo management service satisfaction. This rating is another confirmation of a handicapped management situation on wildlife resources that would have been generating income for the government. In some countries in the world wildlife resources are considered very important, and managed sustainably in order to generate income that could be used to run other services in the government, but in the context of Cameroon the situation is quite different. Wildlife management in Cameroon and neighboring countries is facing a lot of challenges because of

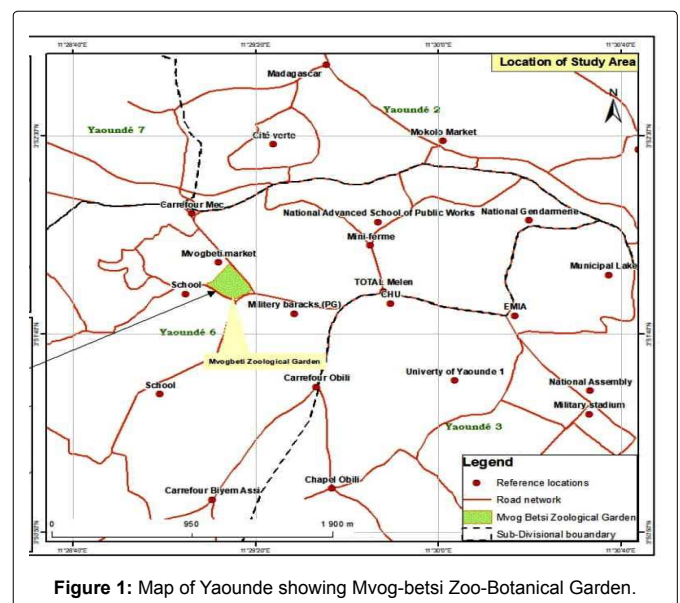


Figure 1: Map of Yaounde showing Mvog-betsi Zoo-Botanical Garden.

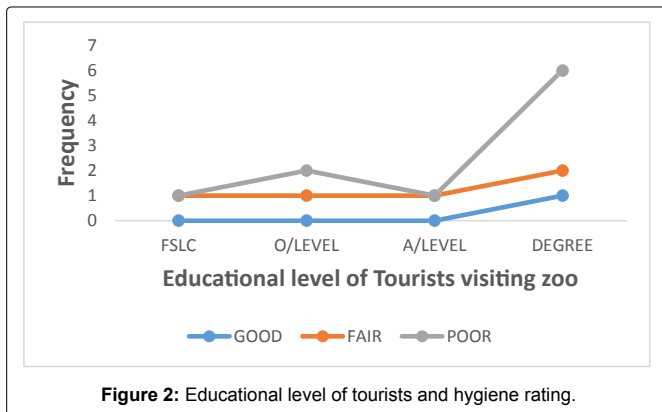


Figure 2: Educational level of tourists and hygiene rating.

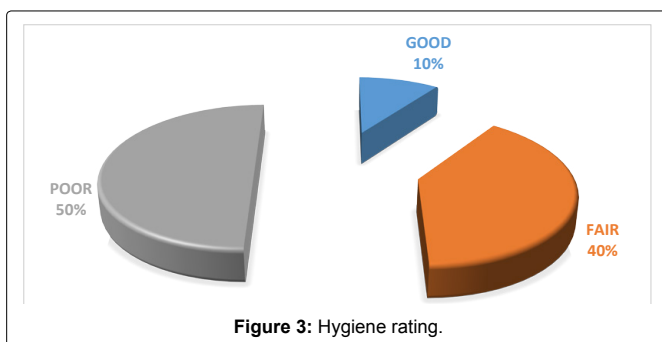


Figure 3: Hygiene rating.

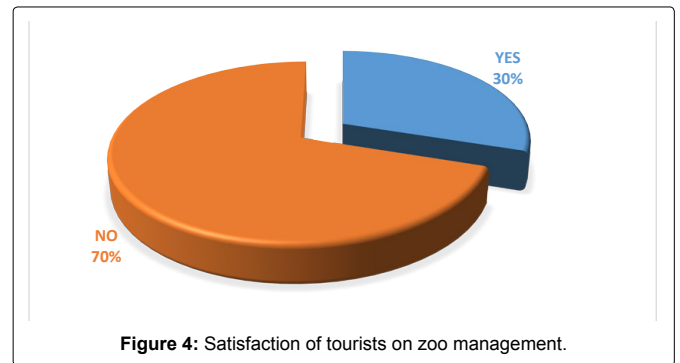


Figure 4: Satisfaction of tourists on zoo management.

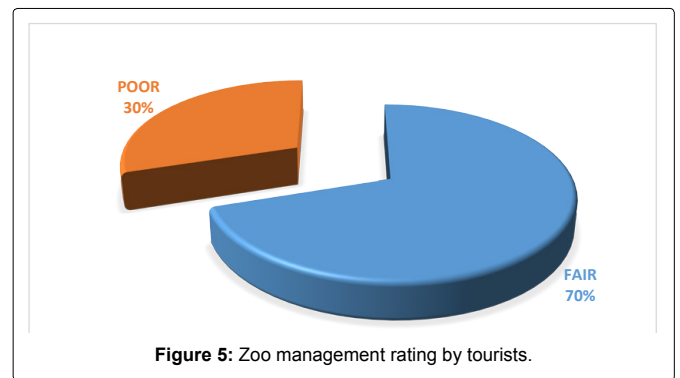


Figure 5: Zoo management rating by tourists.

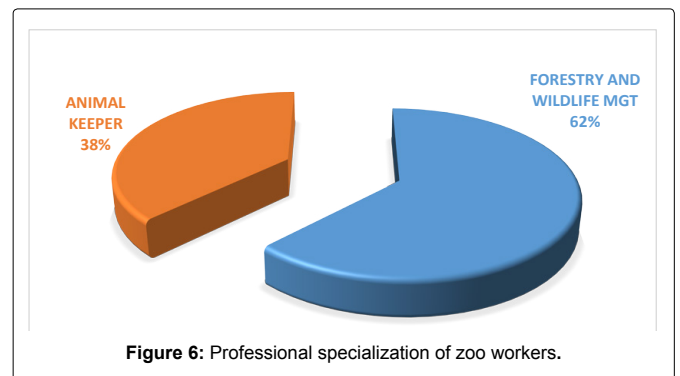


Figure 6: Professional specialization of zoo workers.

lack of expertise management knowledge that should have directed the management efforts into sustainability. And since the expected management goals are not seen by most wildlife-rich communities, indiscriminate hunting and trapping of wildlife for bush-meat consumption is rampant. Also, the absence of zoo management training programs in Cameroon has resulted to the mismanagement of the facilities. All zoos in Cameroon are managed by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, and not the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure that should have provided required training to its staff in zoo management.

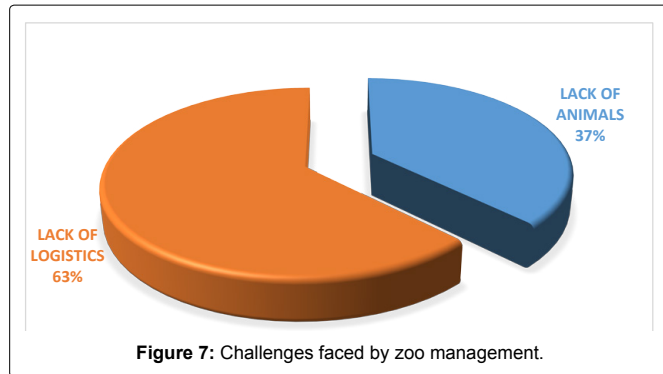
Though the survey recorded 70% and 30% on 'fair' and 'poor' management rating on Mvog-Betsi Zoo respectively (Figure 4), there was lack of satisfaction on its services as acknowledged by the tourists. Satisfaction of tourists is primordial in zoo management operation in the world, and any zoo that cannot meet this expectation is far from realistic management approach. However, if the zoo management is having an objective of transposing these animals to the wild, it needs to use a professional wildlife management approach.

Professionally, 62% of the Mvog-Betsi Zoo workers have had educational training in the management of forest and wildlife resources as the study has shown (Figure 5), unfortunately they do not have any professional knowledge on wildlife tourism and zoo management. Additionally, 38% of the workers have no formal training in the management of zoo and have never been sent for in-service training to enhance their knowledge capacity. This approach cannot provide a model in analyzing and solving realistic challenges in the tourism industry. The management of wildlife seized from hunters in the zoo is one of the conservation recommendations. With the objective of transposing them into the wild after some years of zoo domestication, expertise knowledge in handling them is very necessary. More so, the management knowledge on the ecology of each of the animal species in order to provide a captivity simulation

for them is an added advantage to a good management system. Mvog-Betsi Zoo is just a transit point for the transposition of wildlife species into the wild; however, to effectively manage these wild animals regular quarantine services are very necessary, especially on arrival. Also, the zoo can be managed sustainably if the necessary wildlife tourism components are injected into the management operation.

One of the key challenges faced by this zoo is the problem of logistics as recorded by the survey, 63% (Figure 6). Realistically, a professional zoo management team would make good projections and proposals on its needs to the government hierarchy, which is always ready to comply in delivering the required running budget to a management department. But in a situation where the managers lack professional expertise knowledge in zoo management for tourism objective, the financial resources would hardly meet targeted goals. This might be the main problem in Mvog-Betsi Zoo, since the workers have no specialization in zoo management programs, the problem of logistical challenges would likely occur until the government brings a professional management team. A respondent revelation claim of 37% on the need of more wild animals is an additional confirmation

of poor zoo management. Rather, a zoo that is legitimately facing logistical challenges would reject more wildlife intake into its management (Figure 7).



Discussion

Entertainment has traditionally been perceived as one of the primary roles of the zoos. However, entertainment industry is constantly growing enabling individuals to choose from various attractions, making it very hard for the zoos to provide competing and satisfactory experiences [11]. People generally enjoy and appreciate nature and wildlife in their day-to-day lives, and museums, zoos, aquariums and other similar institutions, in addition to entertainment, now offer recreational and educational opportunities to their visitors [30-32]. In modern zoos there has been a shift in emphasis from entertainment toward conservation of species under threat of extinction. They are promoted as places where visitors can learn about animals and how to contribute to the survival of endangered species, but also as a place for social interaction, relaxation or simple outdoor experience [10, 33].

Many people visit zoos to share experiences with their children, strengthen social ties with family and friends, and even find psychological comfort by enjoying the nature and interacting with animals [11,34]. Others point out recreation and enjoyment as high motivators for their visit [35]. Lee [11] conducted a survey at six public zoos in Korea, investigating the demands and satisfaction levels of zoo visitors. Convenience and safety in observing animals were rated as very important, and children were particularly significant motivators for zoo visits. Animals' welfare and information-seeking were identified as the key determinants effecting overall satisfaction. Contrary to the original image of zoos as primarily sites of entertainment, increasing interest in welfare of the zoo animal's pressure zoos to maintain high standards of service and provide a variety of educational programs [11,36].

Wildlife tourism occurs across the globe from safaris to whale watching to polar bears in the arctic. These wildlife tourists travel long distances to see animals in their native locations. This is drastically different from zoos, which are convenient locations where people can easily go to see animals without traveling across the globe. Wildlife tourism can be considered "as an area of overlap between nature-based tourism, ecotourism, consumptive use of wildlife, rural tourism, and human relations with animals" [37]. Experiences with animals in the wild are becoming more important to wildlife tourists [38] and influence their level of satisfaction. The features that make a wildlife experience more memorable include charisma of species, rarity, closeness, first encounters, large numbers, and diversity of species

seen [38]. It is logical to assume that seeing the animals of interest would be incredibly important to wildlife tourists' satisfaction. However, research on satisfaction with animal visibility in wildlife tourism has conflicting results with some studies finding visibility important while others find it has little impact on satisfaction.

Service quality arises when comparing expected performance and perceived performance or actual performance of service delivery as a difference. It is regarded as one of the important drivers of tourist satisfaction [13]. Usually, service quality is measured by a multi-dimensional scale in which different factors exist. In the tourism and hospitality sector, service quality is basically based on tangible and intangible dimensions [39,40]. Service quality exhibits a positive relationship with tourist satisfaction that is why it is [41] recommended for the improvement of enhancing tourist satisfaction.

Safety and feelings of being safe and secure represent another driver of tourist satisfaction. Some authors also pointed out the same fact in their work, like Buckley et al. [42] Highlighted safety as a driver to analyze the particularities of Chinese tourist satisfaction. Further, Lee et al., [43] also focused on the importance of safety to assess different satisfaction levels in Korea. Another study by Imbeah et al., [44] also highlighted the tourists' perceptions of safety and provided evidence about the increasing level of safety expectations among tourists. Customer loyalty in tourism is the most prevalent and analyzed in the tourist satisfaction perspective which is normally based on several dimensions [13]. Among these studied dimensions in the earlier research work, include customer revisit, customer recommendation, and positive word of mouth among visitors, etc. [45,46].

Customer revisit may refer to the repetition or repurchase intention of a particular product/service during recurrent visits. In light of this, tourist satisfaction at some tourist attraction or destination entices the customer to revisit. Customer revisit is an important consequence of the higher level of tourist satisfaction. Chen et al. [41] found that customer revisits enhance destinations competitiveness. Depending upon the perceived value and satisfaction, revisits intentions are more in food tourists [47]. Some more authors also highlighted the same consequence of tourist satisfaction to revisit or repurchase the product or service in the tourism sector [48-50]. However, the previous visit to a tourist attraction also entices to revisit and make recommendations to friends and family, depending upon their feelings and opinions. Alegre and Cladera [51] used the previous visit as a driver to distinguish drivers of tourist intentions. Castañeda et al. [52] analyzed the previous visit to see the effect on customer satisfaction. On the parallel line, Chitty et al., Garcia-Crespo et al., Guiry and Scott [53-55] used the previous visit as a driver of tourist satisfaction. A recent study by Carvache-Franco et al. [56] also pointed out the motivational and intentional factors playing the role for re-visitation and recommending to others in the geographical region of Costa Rica.

Zoos attract a greater diversity of visitors than other types of museums [57]. Zoo visitors tend to have a higher educational and socioeconomic status than non-visitors [58, 59]. The most common visiting group type is the family group with children [60, 61]. It is ordinary to find that visitors in zoos and aquariums are already more concerned with the environment and conservation issues than the general public [62, 63]. Previous zoo studies have documented demographics as an overview of the sample population but studies have not compared demographic factors to determine if there are differences in segments of zoo visitors.

Conclusion

The constant destruction of wildlife habitat through agriculture, infrastructural construction, lumbering, and gathering is gradually transforming zoos into permanent wildlife conservation centers. Though, the original focus of the zoo is education and tourism, the transitional component of the seized wildlife from hunters within Cameroon has increased wildlife intakes, adding more management pressure on the zoo authorities. Mvog-Betsi Zoo is a well-known wildlife center in Cameroon that has existed for decades, and its record of keeping wildlife for longer periods before their relocation into the wild environment is also known. However, the addition of wildlife tourism component to its management is a well-calculated conservation strategy to enhance sustainability. Nonetheless, the influx of tourists into a zoo depends on many factors, ranging from the visibility of wildlife in their enclosures, safety of tourists, hospitality of workers, and regular in-service training programs of workers. This study has revealed a very low satisfaction rate of tourists that visited the Mvog-Betsi zoo during the study period; hence, the zoo management should include in-service wildlife tourism training programs for its workers. Wildlife relocation programs into the wild should be given adequate consideration since the animals often face re-adaptation challenges in the wild when they have spent a longer time in the zoos. Furthermore, to attract visitors, modern zoos must be both entertaining and educational, without jeopardizing the animals' welfare. The zoo needs to continue its role as a place for recreation and family bonds, but also to focus attention to more diverse educational programs that will suit the needs and requirements of the visitors, and most importantly, investing more in marketing strategies. Further research is required in order to, for example, measure the impact of the zoo experience on visitors' conservation knowledge, attitudes and behaviors or to understand how and what visitors learn during their visitations.

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